

1. (Previously Presented) A local network having a ring network configuration with a plurality of subscribers each connected within the ring network by a data line to transmit and receive data therebetween, the local network comprising:

a first subscriber configured as a data source that transmits compressed audio and video data onto the ring network;

a second subscriber that receives decompressed audio data;

a third subscriber that receives decompressed video data,

a fourth subscriber that includes

(i) a bit stream decoder that decodes the compressed audio and video data and provides decompressed audio and video data;

(ii) a separation stage that receives the decompressed audio and video data and separates the decompressed audio and video data to provide the decompressed audio data signal and the decompressed video data signal; and

(iii) a control unit that controls the transmission of the decompressed audio data signal and the decompressed video data signal onto the ring network.

2. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 1, where the second subscriber comprises a data sink.

3. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 1, where the third subscriber comprises a data sink.

4. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 1, where the fourth subscriber comprises a data sink.

5. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 1, where the second, third and fourth subscribers each comprise a data sink.

6. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 5, where the second, third and fourth subscribers are separate from each other and connected within the ring network by the data line.

7. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 1, where the bit stream decoder comprises an MPEG-1 decoder.

8. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 1, where the bit stream decoder comprises one of an MPEG-1 decoder, an MPEG-2 decoder, an AC-3 decoder, and a JPEG decoder.

9. (Previously Presented) A method for communicating audio and video data in a local network, comprising:

transmitting compressed audio and video data from a data source through a data line to a data sink;

receiving the compressed audio and video data;

decompressing the received compressed audio and video data to provide decompressed data;

processing the decompressed data to provide decompressed audio data and decompressed video data; and

transmitting the decompressed audio data and the decompressed video data onto the local network.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 9, where the steps of receiving, decompressing, processing and transmitting occur in the data sink.

11. (Cancelled)

12. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 1, where the bit stream decoder comprises an MPEG-2 decoder.

13. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 1, where the bit stream decoder comprises an AC-3 decoder.

14. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 1, where the bit stream decoder comprises a JPEG decoder.

15. (Previously Presented) The local network of claim 1, where the bit stream decoder comprises a video decoder and an audio decoder.

16. (Previously Presented) A subscriber unit for use in a local network that includes a data source which provides compressed multimedia data, a first data sink that plays back decompressed audio data, and a second data sink having a display device that plays back decompressed video data, where the subscriber unit, the data source and the first and second data sinks are each connected to a ring network by a data line to transmit onto and receive data from the ring network, the subscriber unit comprising:

(i) a bit stream decoder that decodes the compressed audio and video data and provides decompressed data indicative thereof;

(ii) a separation stage that receives the decompressed data, and separates audio and video data within the decompressed data to provide a decompressed video data signal and a decompressed audio data signal; and

(iii) a control unit that controls the transmission of the decompressed video data signal and the decompressed audio data signal onto the ring network.

17. (Previously Presented) A local network having a ring network configuration with a plurality of subscribers each connected within the ring network by an optical data line to transmit and receive data therebetween, the local network comprising:

a first subscriber configured as a data source that transmits compressed audio and video data onto the ring network;

a second subscriber that receives the transmitted compressed audio and video data, where the second subscriber includes a separation stage that separates the compressed audio and video data to provide a compressed audio data signal and a compressed video data signal, and a control

unit that controls the transmission of the compressed audio data signal and the compressed video data signal onto the ring network;

a third subscriber that receives the compressed audio data signal, where the third subscriber includes an audio bit stream decoder that decodes the compressed audio data signal and provides decompressed audio data, and a unit that reproduces the decompressed audio data; and

a fourth subscriber that receives the compressed video data signal, where the fourth subscriber includes a video audio bit stream decoder that decodes the compressed video data signal and provides decompressed video data, and a unit that reproduces the decompressed video data.